

Serial No. 09/681,099
Filed: January 4, 2001
Page 11 of 12

Examiner: Joseph C. Merek
Group Art Unit: 3727

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-32, 34-38, and 62-80, all directed to the sleeve and at least the collar, remain in this application. Claims 33, 39-61, and 81, directed to the sleeve alone, have been cancelled without prejudice in order to place the claims in condition for appeal. Thus, the only claims remaining in the application are directed to the combination of at least the sleeve and collar.

The Examiner has indicated allowance of claims 62-80, and that claims 18 and 31 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. Applicants would initially like to thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 62-80. Claim 62 is essentially claim 18 rewritten in independent form, which was indicated as allowable. Claim 75 is essentially claim 31 rewritten in independent form, which was indicated as allowable.

Procedural Status:

Claims 1-17, 19-30, 32, 34-38, 42, 43, 45, 46, 52, and 81 were previously appealed. In response to Applicants' Petition against the reopening of prosecution based on a restriction requirement, prosecution was re-opened based on a new ground of rejection for claims 43-46 and 52, directed to the sleeve only, in view of U.S. Patent No. 2,617,549 to Egger.

Since the claims to the sleeve alone are canceled from the application, the new ground of rejection is no longer relevant to the remaining claims.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

The Examiner has rejected claims 43-46 and 52 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 2,617,549 to Egger. Claims 43-46 and 52 have been cancelled without prejudice and, thus, the rejection is moot.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 43, 45, 46, and 52 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,305,656 to Wemyss in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,870,837 to Weins. Claims 43, 45, 46, and 52 have been cancelled without prejudice and, thus, the rejection is moot.

Serial No. 09/681,099
Filed: January 4, 2001
Page 12 of 12

Examiner: Joseph C. Merek
Group Art Unit: 3727

Claims 42 and 81 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,305,656 to Wemyss in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,870,837 to Weins and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,747,507 to Fitzgerald et al. Claims 42 and 81 have been cancelled without prejudice and, thus, the rejection is moot.

The various rejections of claims 1-17, 19-30, 32, and 34-38 in the current Office Action are identical to rejections that were previously appealed. These claims are not rejected based on the asserted new grounds. Thus, these claims have at least been twice rejected on the same grounds.

Since claims 1-17, 19-30, 32, and 34-38 have been at least twice rejected on the same grounds, Applicants are electing to appeal their rejection as their response to this Office Action.

A Notice of Appeal and Appeal Brief are being filed herewith.

Respectfully submitted,

RICHARD E. VOGEL & TIMOTHY J. FOLTZ

Dated: 2/5/04

By: Mark A. Davis

Mark A. Davis (Reg. No. 37,118)
McGARRY BAIR PC
171 Monroe Avenue, NW, Suite 600
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
616-742-3500

G0116056.DOC